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27 August 1979

Memorandum for the Record

Subject: Meeting with Leon Fuerth, Staff Director of the Aspin Subcommittee, HPSCI, 24 August 1979

1. I met with Leon Fuerth, Staff Director of the Les Aspin Subcommittee of HPSCI, on 24 August 1979, at his request, made through the NFAC Congressional Liaison Office. The meeting was in my office at Headquarters.

2. Mr. Fuerth, whom I had known in the early 1970s as a consular officer in Zagreb when I was Ambassador at Belgrade, came by alone. I was unaccompanied, but had expected that an Agency liaison representative would be present. Mr. Fuerth has since served as Hal Sonnenfeld's Special Assistant and in State's Politico-Military Bureau; resigned from the Foreign Service about four months ago to take up his present duties. Much of our conversation dealt with friends and events in the Foreign Service.

3. On the work of the Aspin Subcommittee, Fuerth said that Mr. Aspin is undertaking a major new project to "appraise the quality of US intelligence". He believes, Fuerth noted, that the period of "muckraking oversight" is now coming to an end and wishes to establish a more creative context between the Congress and the Intelligence Community. I asked something about relationships with another Evaluation Subcommittee. Fuerth rejoined that I was "thinking in Executive Branch terms and not in Congressional terms". The latter, he said, involve a process of competing or bargaining for turf--not an arrangement of assigned responsibilities and tidy organizational charts. In any event, Tom Latimer knew all about Mr. Aspin's new interests and had not objected. Fuerth commented that Aspin had intellect, energy, and a dizzying ability to walk along the brink of what was permissible to do and to publicize. He (Fuerth) had never known him to overstep the limits, but occasionally the performance was breathtaking.

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4. According to Fuerth, Mr. Aspin's first project will be to evaluate Community intelligence on the world oil problem, not only its technical petroleum forecasts but also its political adequacy, i.e., the quality of production and forecasting on the stability of countries important in the petroleum market.

5. Additionally, Fuerth has been asked to compile a list of key concepts by which the quality of intelligence performance can be appraised and around which the Aspin Subcommittee can organize its future endeavors. He cited, as the sort of key issues Aspin is interested in, such matters as: current intelligence versus longer range estimates; the presence or absence of policy-relevance in assessments; straight-line projections versus alternative modeling; connections and responsiveness between the policymaking establishment and the Intelligence Community. Of these, policy-relevance was, he thought, probably the most important. Fuerth said he was just beginning this work but had read a great deal of the open literature, much of recent NFAC production, and all of the reports of the Evaluations Subcommittee. He knew well, and was thoroughly familiar with the work of, the latter's staff people, who have been spending a great deal of time in the Agency. Eventually, he thought, the Aspin Subcommittee would also wish to get into organizational questions, both for the Community and for NSC structure, "to prepare for the next Administration."

6. Fuerth wondered whether the Senior Review Panel had produced studies bearing on any of these matters that would be helpful. I told him that we had not done so, and doubted that we felt sufficiently far along our learning curves to undertake such broad-based reviews.

7. Fuerth said he would like to keep in touch. I told him I would always be glad to talk with him.

8. I have no independent basis for evaluating the conversation.

William L. Leonhart

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